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MESSAGE

OF

GOV. JOHN J. PETTUS,

TO THE

Legislature of Mississippi,

DELIVERED

ON THE FIFTH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 1861.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE,
Jackson, Miss., Nov. 5, 1861.

Gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives:—

The two years which have elapsed since the last regular session of the Legislature, have been marked by events of more vital importance to the people of Mississippi than any which have transpired since the formation of the State.

The Federal Union, which was vainly stamped 'perpetual," has been dissolved by the withdrawal of eleven of the sovereign States which composed it. For the statement of the causes which led to this separation, and the part which Mississippi acted, I must refer you to the legislation of the Convention of the people of the State, and the several extra sessions of the Legislature, which I deemed it my duty to convoke. The wisdom and necessity of this action have ceased to be subjects of debate between citizens of seceded States.

With a unanimity unparalleled in the history of republican governments, the people of this State have decided that the adminis-

tration of the Federal Government in the hands of Mr. Lincoln, would be destructive of the ends for which governments are instituted among men, and have instituted a new government, laying its foundations on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them seems most likely to effect their happiness and safety.

Whether we shall be permitted to exercise this unquestionable and inestimable right of sovereign States, or be subjugated and governed at the will of a Northern despot, is the grave question which is now being debated on bloodier fields, and with larger armies than this continent has heretofore known; and until it is decided in our favor, which is the only question worthy the attention of public or private men, for if decided against us, all for which freemen should wish to live is lost to us and our children forever.

Then to place Mississippi in the best condition to exert her full force in rendering this conflict successful, is certainly the first duty, and I doubt not will be the chief aim of the present Legislature.

The most obvious means of accomplishing this, is the adoption of means to render more comfortable and healthy, and consequently more efficient, the volunteers who are now bravely bearing all the hardships incident to a soldier's life. A more regular and efficient mode of supplying them with clothing is imperatively demanded.

The law enacted at the last session of the Legislature, authorizing the Boards of Police of the several counties to levy a tax sufficient to provide clothing for the companies of their respective counties, operates unequally, and in some instances oppressively. Some counties with but little wealth have furnished from ten to fifteen companies, while others, with more than double the wealth have furnished but two or three. The poorer counties are thus required to bear more than a just ratio in supporting the war. I suggest the propriety of providing clothing at the expense of the State, thus placing the burthen of sustaining the troops on the property which they are defending; or if deemed best, the State could be reimbursed for this outlay, by receiving from the Confederate States the commutation money due the troops and thus only act as an agent to facilitate the conversion of the commutation money into suitable clothing.

The provisions of the law of 1857, giving to members of volunteer companies nine dollars per annum, was extended by ordinance of the Convention, to all volunteers who should be mustered into the service of the State under the military ordinance of said Convention. Many companies having entered the Confederate service without being mustered into the service of the State, have not received the benefit of this provision and complain of this discrimination against them. I respectfully suggest the propriety

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and justice of placing all on an equa footing in this respect, and giving to companies which have gone directly into the Confederate service similar advantages with those mustered into the service of the State.

When this matter was under consideration in the Convention, no other mode of raising volunteers than that provided for in the ordinance referred to, was thought of, and this accounts for the seeming partiality. If any discrimination is made, it should be in favor of, and not against volunteers who enlist for the war.

From the report of the Adjutant General herewith transmitted, it will be seen that Mississippi has now in the Confederate service twenty-two regiments and one battalion of infantry, one regiment and fourteen companies of calvary and eleven companies of artillery, amounting in the aggregate to about 23,000; the number not definitely stated, for the reason that several of the regiments have no muster rolls on file at the Adjutant General's office. To this estimate should be added a considerable number of independent companies tendered directly to the Confederate Authorities, and ordered to Missouri, Kentucky or Virginia, probably fifteen companies, making the number over 25,000.

When this number shall be further increased by the thirty companies enlisted for the war, now in camps in the State, and the companies now rapidly sending in their tenders of service under the recent call of Major General A. S. Johnston for ten thousand troops, the aggregate will exceed 35,000, which is probably a larger proportion of the adult male population, than any State or nation has sent forth to war in modern times; and when it is remembered that not one of all the thousands has been required by law to enter the service, or constrained by any force save their patriotic desire to stand between the State and her enemies, Mississippi may well feel proud of her volunteer defenders and cheerfully bear any burthen necessary to cherish and sustain them.

In the month of August last, the eight regiments ordered to be raised by the ordinance of the Convention, adopted 23d of January, 1861, were completed.

Believing that the Federal Government would invade the seashore and cotton shipping ports of the South this fall, and that the Confederate Government would require a large force to meet that invasion, I ordered the eight regiments into camps of instruction, that they might be inured to camp life, get over the diseases incident to camps, be instructed and drilled, and thus rendered fit representatives of Mississippi on the battlefield, and capable of doing credit to themselves and service to the Confederacy. I expected that they would go from these camps into the Confederate service, and the result has verified my expectations, and they have all been mustered into that service, and ten thousand more called for by the Confederate authorities to repel the desperate efforts

now being made to subjugate the seceding States. Having these troops in camps, I was enabled promptly to respond to the urgent calls of Generals Johnston and Polk for help in Kentucky, where four of the regiments have been sent, and to meet the demand for more troops on the sea-shore, although many of my fellow-citizens have differed with me in opinion, in regard to the necessity or propriety of this measure. Now when the plans of the enemy are more fully developed, my only regret in the matter is, that Mississippi did not have more troops better drilled and better equipped, ready to meet the hosts of enemies now threatening her on the North and on the South.

To facilitate forming and sustaining these camps of instruction, the Brigadier Generals were furnished with Treasury Notes and required to convass their brigadier districts, and exchange the notes, if practicable, for money, and buy camp equipage, provisions, and arms of every description, which could be made available for military purposes. Double-barrel shot guns and hunting rifles were thus obtained to the number of three or four thousand, and are now being altered or repaired in this city and in Aberdeen. Many of them have already been sent to the troops in Kentucky and to those in camp at Enterprise. All other sources of supply of arms having failed, I resorted to this as a matter of necessity, believing that should we not be able to get better arms before the enemy came, our volunteers would be able to exchange them for better after their first battle.

The Convention of the State in January last, authorized and provided for the issuing of one million of Treasury notes or bonds, to be sold and the proceeds used in the defense of the State.—Finding it impossible to effect the sale of a sufficient amount of these notes for gold and silver, to meet the heavy expenses incident to raising and providing an outfit for the large number of troops required from this State, I have exercised a discretion which I believe is given me by the ordinance, and caused these notes to be used as money in the purchase of arms, accoutrements, equipage and supplies which were necessary for the defence of the State. In thus acting, I deemed that I was carrying out the spirit of the ordinance, and effecting the manifest purpose and intention of the Convention in the only manner practicable.

The financial condition of the State, requires and will doubtless receive your most earnest consideration. How best to meet the requirements of the Confederate and State Government, for the necessary funds to defray the extraordinary expenses of the present war, is a question which has, and will continue to engage the attention of both Confederate and State Legislatures during the war,

Some well digested financial scheme is now the most pressing want of the country. The people of this State dependent almost

entirely on the sale of cotton for money, having no large cities whose capital is accumulated, and no bank, and having spent the ready money on hand at the commencement of hostilities, in fitting out their sons for the field, will be peculiarly embarrassed in paying their taxes, unless some plan can be devised by which cotton can be converted into the means of payment.

If this can be done, then all trouble on this subject vanishes, and the Confederate Government might double the tax, and it would be paid as cheerfully as the most moderate State tax was ever paid; but unless cotton can be thus exchanged, my deliberate opinion is that the present tax cannot be paid. Various plans for effecting this object have been presented to the country, none of which seem to have met with general approbation. One which appears to be favored at Richmond, is to induce the banks to advance their notes on cotton and other produce. If the banks would consent to this, it seems to me, liable to two very serious objections, First, That the people would be required to pay large sums as interest for the use of the notes of banks, which do not redeem them with specie. Second, that after the Government shall have received and paid out this paper currency and the country flooded with bank paper, what guarantee is offered that the interest paid by the people will be the only loss sustained by them in the transaction, and that the Bank paper thus put in circulation will be finally redeemed. If we must rely on a paper currency, during the continuance of the blockade, which I believe is admitted by all, would it not be both cheaper and safer for the Confederate Government to make that paper currency by issuing Treasury notes to the full amount of the wants of the Government; the Legislatures of the several States might materially aid in giving these notes a continued currency by making them receivable at the State Treasury, for all State dues, and the tax for their ultimate payment be collected on the raising of the blockade; and if necessary, it might be made double or treble the present rate, and it would be less burthensome and more cheerfully paid. I respectfully suggest the propriety of an early consideration of this grave subject by the Legislature, and that such instructions be given to the members of the Confederate Congress from this State, as the assembled representatives of the people, coming fresh from them, and informed fully of their present condition, may deem best calculated to promote the success of our cause, and interest of the State; with this assurance, however, to the Confederate States Congress, assembled at Richmond, that Mississippi will, to the full extent of her power and means, strive to make successful any plan which may be adopted by the Confederate Congress.

Let the Confederate Government be assured that the patient fortitude of the people at home, to bear any and all sacrifices necessary for a successful prosecution of this war, is equal to the daring heroism of our troops in the field, and it will [illegible]

duct this struggle to a glorious termination, and dictate terms of peace, without abating one jot or tittle of our just rights.

Our people may well endure the privations of a few years of war, consoled by the reflection, that for them, with returning peace, comes renewed prosperity; while to our foes, no peace can restore their former prosperity, when bootless and baffled they are driven back to survey the ruin brought on their country by their own folly. They might well be addressed in the language of the veiled Prophet to his deluded followers, "Ye would be dupes and victims, and ye are.

At the commencement of hostilities between the two sections of the United States, a company of volunteers took possession of the Federal property on Ship Island. At the suggestion of the Military Board, the perishable portion of the property was ordered to be sold, and the net proceeds, amounting to something over nine hundred dollars, turned over to Block, McAfee & Co., of New Orleans, who were then purchasing powder and other munitions of war for the State, and has been accounted for in their account current with the State.

Some complaints have been made to me of inconvencies resulting from the absence of civil officers, who have enlisted as volunteers. Believing that no power has been conferred on the Governor to declare or fill vacancies in such cases, I have taken no action, and now refer it to your wisdom to devise whatever remedy may be deemed expedient.

For a detailed account of the expenditures of the State Government for the last two years, I refer you to the reports of the Auditor and Treasurer, now being prepared.

A very large proportion of these expenditures have been incurred for munitions of war, most of which have been turned over to the Confederate Government, with troops sent from this State, and are claimed and admitted to be advances from the State to the Confederate Government, accounts for which, amounting to over three hundred thousand dollars, were sent to Richmond in August last, and seventy-four thousand audited and paid in Confederate Treasury notes; and a recent letter from the Treasurer of the Confederate States, informs me that the balance is now being Audited and will shortly be settled. I have ordered a further account to be taken of advances in munitions of war and provisions, made since August, to be sent on to Richmond, which will amount to several hundred thousand more.

For a full report of all munitions of war and provisions thus turned over to the Confederate Government, I respectfully refer you to the reports of the Quarter-Master General and Chief of Ordnance.

At the last regular session of the Legislature an appropriation of ten thousand dollars was made for repairing and painting the Capitol. Failing to get the painting contracted for at prices

which I thought the State ought to pay, no contract for that portion of the work was made. Contracts for repairing the stone work and porticos, and for repairing the roof were entered into, and a portion of the work done. The stone work at each end of the portico has been braced with bars of iron to prevent any of the stones falling; and the roof repaired thoroughly. All the work done amounts to but a few hundred dollars, and that has not been paid for the reason that the contractors volunteered and left for the war before the work was completed.

The Ordinance of the Convention creating a Military Board, and giving to it power to prescribe rules and regulations for the government of the troops of this State, provided that such action of the Board should be subject to the approval of the Convention or the Legislature, when the Convention should have finally adjourned. At the last called session of the Legislature a full transcript of all the action of the Board was sent to the House of Representatives, and I presume is now with the papers of the unfinished business of that session, and I respectfully call the subject to the consideration of the present Legislature; and herewith transmit a printed copy of the orders of said Board at its earlier and most important sessions. The main purpose for which this Board was created, the organizing and putting troops in the field having been accomplished, a less expensive and less complicated system for the administration of the Military affairs of the State might be devised.

It is my painful duty to inform you that Col. E. R. Burt, Auditor of Public Accounts, fell mortally wounded at the battle of Leesburg, while gallantly leading a Regiment of Mississippi's brave sons to one of the most brilliant victories which has crowned our arms during the war. While we honor the brave dead, and feel that his deeds have shed lustre on the State of Mississippi, and acknowledge that his life was sacrificed in rendering the most valuable service which a citizen can perform for a free people, repelling invaders who seek to enslave them, would it not be well for the State to remember that those who depended on him for the cherishing care of a father and husband, are left with us, and may need assistance which he can give no more? For these reasons I recommend that such provision be made by the State for the family as their circumstances may be found to require.

The magnitude and duration of the war in which we are engaged, I fear, have not been fully appreciated. The vast interests involved exceed anything contended for by armies in modern times. The North, contending for the absolute control of the hundreds of millions of the teeming annual wealth of Southern fields, will not be easily driven from their pretensions to the right to plunder us, and will doubtless submit to any sacrifices so long as hope remains of so rich a conquest. While the Southern

States battling in defense of property, honor, life, all for which freemen should wish to live, cannot abandon the conflict no matter what sacrifices may be required to be made in its continuance. We must triumph or perish! Let the legislative action of the State speak this to our friends and foes as the action of our troops on the field has spoken it, and the conflict may be shortened and victory will be insured.

I cannot in justice close this Message without paying a heartfelt tribute to the patriotic, self-sacrificing devotion exhibited by the women of Mississippi. If our brave defenders are supplied with clothing sufficient to keep the field in the winter campaign, the country will be indebted for it to the patient toil of the daughters of the South.

May the God who rewards virtue and defends the right, bless them and shield those for whom they have toiled.

JOHN J. PETTUS.

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